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Rabbis for Religious Freedom & Equality in Israel



“The State of Israel... will guarantee freedom of religion and conscience...”
Israel's Declaration of Independence (May 1948)

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Introduction

Oct. 10, 2017
20 Tishrei 5777

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Dear Friends,

We trust you have noticed our articles are now introduced by summaries, making them more accessible to rapid review. The entire article is still present, however, for in-depth reading.

[Hiddush's annual Religion and State Index](#), which we hope you have seen online, chronicles the progress we are making among Israel's population in advocating for pluralism in Jewish life. At least 65% of Israel's Jews are with us on important issues, like civil marriage and the equality of the major streams of Judaism.

[Rabbis Marc Angel and Uri Regev co-authored a statement](#), well received nationally and internationally, for Israel to become the State of all of

This week's RRFEI articles

Summaries & Links

1. **Haaretz: Democratic leader Bernie Sanders and six other Democratic Senators sent a letter to PM Netanyahu requesting that he not alienate the liberal streams of American Jewry.** *“We fear actions like the conversion bill and the suspension of the Kotel agreement will strain the unique relationship between our two nations, particularly if the majority of American Jews see the movements to which they are committed denied equal rights in Israel,”* the senators wrote. *“Given all the challenges Israel faces on the international state, we urge you not to alienate committed Zionists.”* [\[LINK\]](#)
2. **Kosher? Historic ruling lets Israeli diners decide.** On September 12 Israel's Supreme Court handed down what could become a monumental change in Israel's kashrut observance in allowing restaurants to state their kashrut standard without receiving a hechsher

the Jewish people, not simply an single sect.

Furthering that goal, Israel's High Court issued a ruling on September 12 stating that restaurants do not have to follow the dictates of the Rabbinat regarding kashrut. They may post their kashrut standards, and allow people to make their own decisions regarding whether they choose to eat in the restaurant. Clearly this is a step supported by the majority of Israelis to dismantle the choke hold on the entire food delivery system, and particularly the eating establishments, given the Chief Rabbinat by Israel's government. In addition, women may be employed as mashgichot, bringing more gender equality to the system.

We would love to see your High Holy Day sermons regarding Israel. Send them to:

organizers@RRFEI.org

We look forward to hearing from you at:

organizers@rrfei.org and on our [FB group](#).

Kol tuv,

Mark

Rabbi Mark H. Levin
RRFEI Editor

from the Chief Rabbinat. *"It's clear to everybody that this ruling spells the end of the rabbinat's monopoly over kashrut,"* said Aaron Leibowitz, an American-born Modern Orthodox rabbi who founded Hashgacha Pratit, an alternative kashrut certification program. *"It's only a matter of time until the kashrut law itself is repealed,"* he predicted. [\[LINK\]](#)

3. ***Does it matter how many Israelis define themselves as Reform\Conservative?*** Shmuel Rosner published an article last week stating that the number of Reform and Conservative Jews in Israel is no where near 6% to 12%, and is closer to under one percent. Rosner allowed an excellent rebuttal two days later, and we believe the thinking reflects the importance of liberal Jewish movements and sentiments among the majority of Israel's Jewish population.

The article states that even though the movements may not reflect a large membership, the thinking inherent in liberal Judaism represents the Jewish thinking of a majority of Israel's population, the future of the State. This very worthwhile article by the leader of Panim, Michal Berman, speaks of the intrinsic and profound structural religious issues in Israel compared to the U.S.. She states:

"I feel it's important to point out that the great partnership between the Reform and Conservative communities in the United States and Israel represents far more than 6-12% of Israeli society. Furthermore, it even represents the majority of Israelis who desire fully equal and democratic lives, without yielding to outside influences coming from coalition agreements and a twisted status quo. Those agreements were formed under the pressure of time and the reluctance of politicians to make changes, once

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and for all, for the good of the entire public, not just a minority." [\[LINK\]](#)

4. **From the JTA: *Mayim Bialik, Michael Douglas join Jewish leaders' call for religious freedom in Israel*** Rabbis Marc Angel and Uri Regev has issued a statement, signed by many of the major leaders of North American Jewry, for a pluralistic and democratic Israel respecting all forms of Jewish life. Please sign and have your community members sign as well. [\[LINK\]](#)

Resources

- [Vision of Hiddush and Rabbis for Religious Freedom](#)
- [Hiddush resources](#)
- [Courts - religious & secular](#)
- [Conversion](#)
- [Death & burial - ancient & now](#)
- [Diaspora-Israel](#)
- [Diversity & inclusivity among Jews](#)
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Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel represents a broad spectrum of Jewish belief and practice, and champions the values of religious freedom and equality fundamental to World Jewry, in partnership with Hiddush for the realization of these principles in Israel and the Diaspora.

Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

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